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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 006138

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EAP FOR A/S HILL AND EAP DAS JOHN NSC FOR MICHAEL GREEN AND
HOLLY MORROW

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [BM](#) [TH](#) [BURMA](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER KANTATHI CALLS AMBASSADOR TO
EXPLAIN AP INTERVIEW

REF: BANGKOK 6101

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RALPH BOYCE. REASON: 1.4 (D)

1. (C) Foreign Minister Kantathi Suphamongkhon telephoned the Ambassador on September 26 to give his explanation of the flap over his recent interview with Associated Press (reftel). Kantathi maintained that his interviewer, Foster Klug, had misrepresented his remarks and had done a similar disservice in the past to Thai Ambassador to the United States Kasit Piromya. Nevertheless, Ambassador Kasit had inexplicably recommended that Kantathi talk to Klug. Kantathi told the Ambassador that the MFA had subsequently issued a statement to clarify his remarks and he had telephoned Secretary Rice to explain directly.

2. (C) The Ambassador responded that he was aware of both the MFA statement and of the Foreign Minister's call to the Secretary. He noted that before the MFA's statement,

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Kantathi's comments had struck a number of people as an indication that Thailand was backtracking on various assurances (FTA, Burma) given during Prime Minister Thaksin's September 19 meeting with the President. Kantathi hastened to reinforce to the Ambassador that Thailand stood by the Joint Statement issued following the Oval office meeting.

3. (C) The Ambassador pointed out to Kantathi that from his early meetings with the Prime Minister he had cautioned about the RTG's proclivity for speaking out on Burma in a manner that portrayed Thailand to many in the United States as an apologist for a criminal regime in Rangoon. In most instances, it was better not to speak at all. Kantathi agreed with the Ambassador's advice, but noted the planned visit to Bangkok by Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win in the coming weeks. The Ambassador told Kantathi that the image of the RTG welcoming the regime's representative to Bangkok would be an unfortunate one. Kantathi replied that he couldn't postpone the visit. The Ambassador noted that the Burmese postponed meetings with regularity, noting UNSYG Special Representative Razali Ismael's now-pathetic efforts to travel to Rangoon.

4. (C) Comment: As has become customary, Kantathi has come up with the "right" things to say, but his tendency to try to tailor his response to his audience will likely land him in trouble again. The Foreign Minister could have a difficult time parsing his words when the Burmese Foreign Minister comes to town next month.

BOYCE